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ABSTRACT

Teachers must be aware of the different circumstances which contribute to children's learning and make their programs relevant to all participating youth. They must know or learn about each child as an individual and about cultural differences, ethnicity, and ecological or social conditions in which children live. Teachers of black youngsters should incorporate key features of black children's home life into the preschool learning environment. Hale (1982) suggests that teachers be drawn from the community served in order to create a learning environment that complements the home culture. Her curriculum model is one in which Afro-American culture is explored and legitimated at the same time. Teachers must also understand other variables associated with teaching young children; among these are computer technology and the media. There are several good reasons for providing preschool children with computer experiences. The earlier a child is introduced to the microcomputer, the more comfortable he or she will feel with this new technological tool. The microcomputer can motivate children to be more creative as they draw upon other acquired skills; it also allows children to work cooperatively with one another. Television has been found to promote passivity, discourage creativity, and reduce the time children have for social interaction. Still, television has positive features as well as negative. Dedicated, responsible teachers, though, are the major influences on children. Charting a course for the child's future, they comprehend children's rights, as stated in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and work to ensure that children receive their just entitlements. (RH)

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MAKING CHILD DEVELOPMENT RELEVANT FOR ALL CHILDREN

PAPER PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

New Orleans, La
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INTRODUCTION

As more women continue to enter into the work force, either by choice or out of necessity, more children will be left in the care of outside providers such as public schools, day care, or head start. Parents who leave their young children to be cared for during the day are now expecting a return on their investment in the area of programs helping children grow and develop their maximum potentials. Teachers and schools are now being held accountable for providing learning activities that stimulate positive growth and development as evidenced by school systems across the country. Accountability is also prevelant in child care settings and programs for young children. This point is made clearer when parents withdraw their children because the program did not allow for teaching the child how to read by the time he/she is ready for kindergarten. Parents will quickly enroll the child in another program where the academic curriculum and other activities allow the child to be exposed to a variety of learning experiences to meet the needs of the individual child.

One important measure of accountability is when teachers and educators make Child Development relevant for all children. In order to be an effective teacher, one must understand certain variables associated with teaching young children such as:

*** cultural differences - ethnicity
*** social conditions
*** ecological conditions
*** ubran conditions/housing - transportation
*** technology - microcomputers, video
*** mass media / television, radio, printed materials
*** parenting/child rearing practices

Today my colleague will focus on making child development relevant for all children from the teacher education perspective, preparation that colleges and universities must provide in training teachers to work with young children in a variety of settings. I will address the issue of teachers currently in the profession with special emphasis on laboratory teachers and Pre-K programs.

TEACHING YOUNG CHILDREN

George Morrison wrote in Early Childhood Education Today, 1980, that teaching is one of the helping professions that offers the opportunity to change the world. You may be teaching a child who will be negotiating a world peace treaty, manager of a national corporation, bank president, or political leader in a few years. You must remember that your classroom could consist of future leaders of this nation or the world, and what you teach and more importantly how you teach young children should be carefully evaluated to determine if the curriculum is meeting the needs of all the children.

In order to be a good teacher, one who is effective and can provide activities that encourage learning by all children, the curriculum content must be made relevant for all the children enrolled in the program regardless of the geographical location. It matters not whether the area is urban, rural, or suburban, teachers need to be aware of the different circumstances which contribute to children learning and make the program relevant for all the children.

MATCHING THE CURRICULUM TO THE CHILD

Let me define curriculum in operational terms. A curriculum is a schedule of planned activities for a classroom, activities selected in advance that are offered for enjoyment and learning, some are highly detailed and others are random. A well planned curriculum supplies structure and directions necesaary for an effective program. It provides clear directions but not necessarily rigid. It offers flexibility and spontaneity and opportunities to capitalize on teachable moments. The plan is designed to reach specific goals and should include ways to chart each childs progress toward mastery of specific skills. A curriculum helps teachers clarify the purpose of activities, decide what they want to achieve and measure their success.

Even though children on the same age level within a group have similar experiences or abilities they will differ greatly as individuals. Each child will have unique skills, special interest and talents. In order to be an effective teacher and teach all the children the teacher needs to know or learn about each child as an individual, cultural differences, ethnicity, and the ecological or social conditions which they live.

When teaching in large urban areas with minority (Black) populations, every attempt should be made to incorporate key features of the black childs home life into the preschool learning environment according to Janice Hale in "Black Children, Their Roots, Culture and Learning Styles. She states that teachers as much as possible should be drawn from the community and I might add, if not from the community they should acquire a knowledge and appreciation of the community. The intent is to create a learning environment that complements the culture of the home.

Ms. Hale's model suggest a balanced curriculum so that Afro-American culture is explored and legitimated at the same time. The basic areas in this model include:

1. Language/communication skills - since black children in urban areas seems to have difficulty with standard english and achievement scores in this area are usually low, more emphasis should be placed on communication, speaking, labeling imitating, reciting, & story telling.
2. Mathematical concepts - Black children have difficulty demonstrating math skills in school, however no problem with math skills in everyday life and in sports.
3. Positive self-concepts and positive attitudes toward learning and school - Teachers should be cautious about turning black children off in class with certain attitudes and statements about culture. The curriculum should include how children feel about themselves in a positive manner.
4. Afro-American Studies - learn about culture, i.e. foods, music, folklore, art, literature and history. - These areas

should be integrated throughout the curriculum, when children are given more information on their culture, they will develop an increase in pride for their heritage.

5. Holidays - Black History - Emancipation
   Teachers should incorporate African culture, Thanksgiving, Native American contribution, Kwanza and the importance of the Emancipation on January First.
6. Extra- Curricular experiences - These should inculde a variety, foods from African culture, fields trips to see black art exhibits at galleries, etc.

According to Ms. Hale, teachers who w rk in urban schools must understand and respect black culture and should respect and work well with parents regarding them as partners in educating the child.

TECHNOLOGY

The most modern and innovative tool for teaching in this decade is the micro computer. The influence of the micro-computer will be felt significantly within the lives of children in the future. It is regarded by many as the leading technological advancement in education today.

When used with young children, the micro-computer can motivate children to be more creative as they draw upon other acquired skills. The computer can be programmed to teach cognitive skills such as colors, math, language, v ocabulary, and perceptual skills as well as thinking skills. Children will learn that computers are an integral part of the world that they live in.

Educators have identified several advantages for using the micro computer such as the following:

* used to explore and discover
* learn about properties, directions, location in space
* give children experiences they cannot normally have through simulation
* to overcome certain physical barriers or mechanical barriers (example, writing)
* allows children to learn graphic designs, color drawings
* controls pace of the lesson
* excellent motivator
* allows for problem solving
* requires children to engage in decision making
* is a machine of infinite patience, does not tire of child's repetitive questions or of the child who cannot get the right answer.
* can present materials in different ways and thus give children wider experiences
* holds the attention of the child longer than most teaching tools
* allows children to work cooperately with one another and this interaction stimutates the development of language skills.
* the earlier a child is introduced to the micro-computer, the more confortable he/she will feel using this new technolocical tool.

THE MEDIA

TELEVISION, RADIO, PRINTED MATERIALS

TELEVISION AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Studies have shown that every American home has at least one and most have two or more television sets. It has also been found that young children spend fron 23-33 hours per week watching television. About one fourth of children's waking hours are spent watching television.

Television has been critized as being a bad influence on children, it has been found to promote passivity and discourage creativity. It cuts down on the amount of time a child has for social interaction with other people. It is however, one of the most powerful influences on the young child.

Positive features offered by television

1. offers numerous models encouraging observational learning for children
2. children learn values, what is good and bad, positive social values. One example is Mr. Rogers showing children how to be honest, to share, to love, and to be kind.
3. Learn positive things about children from other cultures and communities.
4. learn about nature, social life, numbers, letters and other concepts that are helpful.
5. presents fantasy actions for child to copy in his/her play. A word of caution however, a child may not be able to distinguish between fantasy and reality without adult supervision.

Some Criticisms of Television

1. commercial television presents too many aggressive violent models, both live and in cartons.
2. presents too much advertising with contents that promotes products such as snacks, candy, sugared cereals and soft drinks which are unhealthy for children and toys which children pressure parents to purchase.
3. some shows are frightening and increases fears and night mares.
4. promotes sexism through depicting sterotyped male and female roles of minority persons.
5. promotes a negative role model for blacks being protrayed in lower class situations and broken families, and in lower paying jobs.

CONCLUSION

As a teacher of young children, you must know that things don't always go as well as you like. The children you are teaching may have background and culturals that are different from yours. You must also know the variables that will influence classroom teaching and learning, however, it is your responsibility to teach all children enrolled in your classroom regardless of their sex, color, race or religion. You are charting a course for the child's future. As members of the helping profession, teachers must be committed to this porfession in order to be effective and make a positive difference in the life of a child. Consider the following qualities for early childhood teachers as developed by Morrison:

caring	intelligent
compassionate	kind
courteous	loving
dedicated	motivated
enthusiastic	patient
friendly	sensitive
helpful	trusting
honest	understanding

I would like to close with the following rights of children as established by the United Nations in 1979 during the Internationa Year of the Child.

U N DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

* The right to affection, love and understanding
* The right to adequate nutrition and medical care
* The right to full opportunity for play and recreation
* The right to a name and nationality
* The right to special care if handicapped
* The right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster
* The right to learn to be a useful member of society and to develop individual abilities
* The right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and brotherhood
* The right to enjoy these rights regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national or social orgin

All children without any exception whatsoever shall be entitled to these rights without distinction or discrimination.

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